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THE CONCEPT OF TAZKIYATUN NAFS IN SUFISM AS A SOLUTION TO THE MORAL CRISIS IN THE DIGITAL AGE

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Absract

This study originated from a research question regarding the moral crisis in the digital age, characterized by phenomena such as FOMO, social media addiction, the culture of flexing, hoaxes, post-truth, and cyberbullying all of which undermine the integrity, empathy, and spiritual resilience of the younger generation. The research question posed is how the concept of *tazkiyatun nafs* in the Sufi tradition can be implemented as a solution to this digital moral crisis. The method used is qualitative research employing a library research approach, through a systematic analysis of classical Sufi literature, Islamic ethics, and modern media psychology. The results indicate that *tazkiyatun nafs,* with its three stages: *takhalli, tahalli, and tajalli* can serve as a conceptual framework that bridges digital exposure with moral behavior. *Takhalli* is manifested as a spiritual digital detox process that purifies undesirable traits in online interactions; *tahalli* plays a role in fostering virtuous traits through digital moral practices that cultivate empathy, honesty, and responsibility; while *tajalli* brings about divine awareness that guides every digital activity, thereby fostering emotional stability and inner peace. The findings of this study confirm that *tazkiyatun nafs* is not only theologically relevant but also applicable in the context of contemporary digital psychology, and can be implemented through digital muhasabah, online zikir communities, and technology-based religious education. Thus, this study makes a tangible contribution to strengthening the moral integrity, spiritual well-being, and mental resilience of the younger generation as they face the challenges of the digital age.

Keywords: *Tazkiyatun Nafs, Sufism, Moral Crisis, Digital Age*

Abstrak

Penelitian ini berawal dari rumusan masalah mengenai krisis moral di era digital yang ditandai oleh fenomena FOMO, adiksi media sosial, budaya flexing, hoaks, post-truth, dan cyberbullying yang melemahkan integritas, empati, serta ketahanan spiritual generasi muda. Pertanyaan penelitian yang diajukan adalah bagaimana konsep *tazkiyatun nafs* dalam tradisi tasawuf dapat diimplementasikan sebagai solusi terhadap krisis moral digital tersebut. Metode yang digunakan adalah penelitian kualitatif dengan pendekatan *library research*, melalui analisis sistematis terhadap literatur sufisme klasik, etika Islam, dan psikologi media modern. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa *tazkiyatun nafs*, dengan tiga tahapannya yaitu *takhalli, tahalli, dan tajalli*, mampu menjadi kerangka konseptual yang menjembatani paparan digital dengan perilaku moral. *Takhalli* diwujudkan sebagai proses digital detox spiritual yang membersihkan sifat tercela dalam interaksi daring, t*ahalli* berperan dalam pembentukan sifat terpuji melalui praktik moral digital yang menumbuhkan empati, kejujuran, dan tanggung jawab, sedangkan *tajalli* menghadirkan kesadaran Ilahi yang menuntun setiap aktivitas digital sehingga

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melahirkan stabilitas emosional dan ketentraman batin. Temuan penelitian ini menegaskan bahwa *tazkiyatun nafs* tidak hanya relevan secara teologis, tetapi juga aplikatif dalam konteks psikologi digital kontemporer, serta dapat diterapkan melalui muhasabah digital, komunitas zikir daring, dan pendidikan agama berbasis teknologi. Dengan demikian, penelitian ini memberikan kontribusi nyata bagi penguatan integritas moral, kesejahteraan spiritual, dan ketahanan mental generasi muda dalam menghadapi tantangan era digital.

Kata Kunci: *Tazkiyatun Nafs, Tasawuf, Krisis Moral, Era Digital*

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A. Introduction

The digital age has brought about a major transformation in the way people learn, work, communicate, and build their identities. Nearly unlimited access to information, social media algorithms that regulate the flow of content, and a culture of immediacy that demands instant gratification offer extraordinary convenience (Veldhoven et al., 2021). However, behind all of this lies a serious problem in the form of a moral crisis that is becoming increasingly evident among the younger generation. Technology, which should serve as a means of self-development, often instead normalizes an instant, hedonistic, and materialistic mindset, resulting in a generation that is technically advanced but spiritually and ethically fragile (Bayhaqi & Masnawati, 2024).

The digital moral crisis is evident in various social phenomena that are becoming increasingly alarming. The rapid flow of information fuels disinformation, polarization, and intolerant and antisocial behavior (Bavel et al., 2024). FOMO (Fear of Missing Out) has become one of the most prominent phenomena. Surveys of children aged 9–11, as well as college students and young adults, show a significant correlation between the intensity of social media use and social anxiety and feelings of being left out of one's social circle. FOMO has been shown to be a predictor of compulsive online behavior, driving individuals to constantly check notifications and compare themselves to others, thereby exacerbating emotional instability and weakening spiritual resilience (Tandon et al., 2021).

Furthermore, the culture of "flexing" or flaunting one's lifestyle on social media has a negative impact on religiosity and social solidarity, and is even correlated with criminal tendencies. The urge to display luxury and social status fosters materialistic attitudes, envy, and unhealthy competition, which further distance individuals from the values of simplicity and honesty (Fahmi et al., 2024). The phenomenon of hoaxes and the post-truth culture are also gaining momentum through online messaging platforms such as WhatsApp. Netnographic findings show that the spread of hoaxes is often linked to group and religious identities, while studies on digital religiosity confirm that hoaxes undermine the authority of religious values and exacerbate social polarization. The post-truth culture makes public opinion and algorithms more dominant than objective truth, thereby weakening moral reflection and spiritual awareness (Rianto, 2019). Meanwhile,

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cyberbullying is closely linked to increased social anxiety, depression, and declining mental health. Victims of cyberbullying often experience psychological isolation and a loss of self-confidence, while perpetrators become accustomed to aggressive behavior that is detached from moral control (Kunhao et al., 2024).

In the Sufi tradition, *tazkiyatun naf*s is understood as the process of purifying the soul of blameworthy traits and replacing them with noble ones, until one attains inner peace and closeness to Allah. Sufi scholars such as Al-Ghazali have formulated the stages and methods of *tazkiyah* relevant to character development. Al-Ghazali emphasizes the stages of *takhalli, tahalli,* and *tajalli* that is, purifying oneself of blameworthy traits, filling oneself with praiseworthy traits, and fully realizing Allah's presence within the soul (Hawwa, 2022)

A research gap emerges from a literature review showing that most studies focus on digital literacy, platform regulation, or secular ethics using a technical-cognitive approach. Others emphasize psychological interventions such as mindfulness, CBT, and anxiety management. Studies addressing Islamic spirituality remain limited and tend to be conceptual-theological; few have directly linked them to digital behavioral phenomena such as FOMO, cyberbullying, or flexing. Thus, this research gap was clearly identified through the literature review, and this study aims to fill that gap by offering a more integrative conceptual framework.

The novelty of this study is evident in two main aspects. In terms of approach, previous studies have employed a technical-cognitive or secular psychological approach, whereas this article adopts a spiritual-ontological approach, using *tazkiyatun nafs* as the primary framework that addresses the root causes of the soul's issues. In terms of conceptual models, previous research did not position spirituality as a mediator, whereas this article proposes an integrative model in which *tazkiyatun nafs* functions as a mediator between digital exposure and moral behavior. These three aspects have not been discussed in previous research.

The scientific contribution of this article is also evident. The theoretical contribution consists of an integrative conceptual model that explains *tazkiyah* as a mediator between digital exposure and moral behavior, with the mechanisms of t*akhalli* leading to digital detox, *tahalli* leading to the formation of spiritual habits, and *tajalli* leading to full awareness. The methodological contribution consists of a proposed framework of *tazkiyah* indicators that can serve as a reference for future research. The contribution to the literature consists of a systematic synthesis that highlights the existence of a research gap. The practical contribution consists of an implementable *tazkiyah*-based intervention model, such as a muhasabah reminder app, an online zikir community, and digital religious education modules. Thus, this article does not merely repeat previous studies but offers a tangible contribution to the development of Sufism and digital morality.

The urgency and relevance of this research lie in its effort to provide solutions that address the root causes of the digital moral crisis. A generation that possesses only

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technological skills without spiritual purification risks losing its integrity, empathy, and purpose in life. Therefore, research on *tazkiyatun nafs* as a solution to the moral crisis in the digital age has become extremely urgent. This article reaffirms the relevance of Sufism, particularly *tazkiyatun nafs*, as a tangible and contextually appropriate solution for fostering moral integrity, spiritual well-being, and mental resilience among the younger generation. This article provides a conceptual framework that can be applied in contemporary digital psychology and Islamic education. This conceptual contribution advances the study of Sufism from descriptive theological exposition to a more practical intervention model, while connecting the classical Sufi tradition with the moral challenges of the digital age.

B. Method

The type of research used in the preparation of this scientific paper is qualitative research using the library research method. Data were collected through the search, selection, and critical review of relevant written sources, such as books, journals, academic documents, conference proceedings, and previous research findings (Fadli, 2021). The main focus of this research is on how *tazkiyatun nafs* is understood in the Sufi tradition, how this concept can be applied in modern life, and how it serves as a response to the moral crisis arising from the development of digital technology

Within this framework, a comparative analysis is conducted between classical ethics and modern media psychology. The classical ethics referred to encompass the thought of scholars such as Al-Ghazali, who emphasized the importance of purifying the soul, controlling one's desires, and cultivating good character as the foundation of morality. In contrast, modern media psychology highlights the impact of digital technology on human behavior, including the phenomenon of social media addiction, algorithms that shape mindsets, and the degradation of moral values resulting from exposure to digital content. This comparison is conducted systematically to identify both common ground and fundamental differences.

The research data sources include journal articles, conference proceedings, and academic books relevant to the themes of Sufism, Islamic ethics, education, and digital morality (Abdurrahman, 2024). The literature reviewed includes publications in Indonesian and English. Sources were selected based on journal indexing, full access to articles, and direct relevance to the research focus. Literature that did not meet these criteria such as gray literature, policy reports, newsletters, or articles without full access was not included in the analysis (Adlini et al., 2022).

The analysis procedure consists of a series of interrelated steps. The first step is the identification and selection of relevant literature based on inclusion and exclusion criteria, ensuring that only sources meeting academic standards are used. The second step is thematic synthesis, which involves grouping the literature to identify patterns and connections among studies (Purssell & Gould, 2021). The third stage is a critical comparative analysis of classical ethics and modern media psychology. This analysis is

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conducted systematically to demonstrate how the concept of *tazkiyatun nafs* can be positioned as a relevant solution to the moral crisis in the digital age.

C. Results and Discussion

1. The Concept of *Tazkiyatun Nafs* in the Sufi Tradition

The conceptualization of *tazkiyatun nafs* in the Sufi tradition is a theological and spiritual construct that exhibits conceptual consistency across generations. *Tazkiyatun nafs* is understood as a systematic process of purifying the soul from vile traits and replacing them with noble ones until the soul attains tranquility, peace, and closeness to Allah. Theologically, the concept of *tazkiyatun nafs* is grounded in the Qur'an, Surah Al-Shams, verses 9–10: "Blessed is he who purifies his soul (nafs), and woe to him who defiles it." These verses emphasize that the purification of the soul is not merely a spiritual choice, but rather an existential responsibility of human beings that determines the success of their lives in this world and the hereafter (Abdilah et al., 2025).

Etymologically, the word *tazkiyah* (تزكية) derives from the root verb zakka–yuzakki (زكى – يزكي), which means purification or cleansing. Meanwhile, the term nafs (النفس) has a broad range of meanings, encompassing the heart, the ego, and the soul. In another sense, nafs is also associated with physical needs such as food, drink, clothing, shelter, popularity, and wealth. These needs often serve as a gateway to various illnesses, both mental and physical. Additionally, nafs can also be understood as breath, a living being, the self, the person, the essence, and various other meanings depending on the context in which it is used (Anbiya, 2023).

Al-Ghazali defines the nafs as the force of anger and desire inherent in human beings, which is the source of various evils. From a Sufi perspective, the nafs reaches the level of nafs al-muthmainnah when the soul is clear and pure that is, when it is able to return everything to Allah and resist the impulses of the nafs. Conversely, when the nafs succumbs to lust and is influenced by the whispers of Satan, this state is called nafs al-ammarah bi al-su', that is, a condition of the soul that drives humans toward reprehensible behavior (Harahap & Ependi, 2023).

Imam Al-Ghazali, in *Iḥyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn,* formulated a systematic three-stage framework that is the most frequently cited in contemporary Sufi literature. The first stage is *takhalli*, which is the purification of the soul from blameworthy traits. Al-Ghazali emphasizes that a soul still entangled in blameworthy traits cannot fully receive divine light, just as a vessel still containing dirt cannot receive clean water. The reprehensible traits that must be cast aside include ghaflah (spiritual negligence), ujub (self-conceit), riya' (showiness), sum'ah (desire for recognition), hasad (envy), ghish (deception), kibr (arrogance), and hubb al-dunya (excessive love of the world). The process of *takhalli* is carried out through muhasabah (daily self-reflection), mujahadah al-nafs (struggling against the impulses of the self), tazakkur (remembering death and the hereafter), and qiyam al-lail (night prayer) (Amin & Musdar, 2008).

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The second stage is *tahalli*, which involves imbuing the soul with virtuous qualities. Al-Ghazali emphasizes that this process must be carried out gradually, starting with the easiest qualities and progressing to the most difficult. The virtuous qualities that must be cultivated include patience, contentment, gratitude, trustworthiness, humility, truthfulness, forbearance, and piety. The process of *tahalli* is carried out through taʿallum (learning from books and teachers), tataḍḍun (practicing the application of virtuous qualities), targhīb (strengthening motivation by remembering the reward of Paradise), and tawfīq (seeking Allah's help for consistency) (Al-Ghazali, 1998)

The third stage is understood as *tajalli*, that is, the revelation of the light of ma'rifat to Allah in the heart of a servant after undergoing a process of purification of the soul. At this stage, the heart attains tranquility (ṭuma'nīnah), closeness to Allah (qurb), and grows stronger in muraqabah and musyahadah of His greatness. This state is attained through continuous zikr, mujahadah, and worship performed with complete sincerity, so that the heart is freed from the domination of carnal desires and draws ever closer to Allah (Al-Ghazali, 1998).

Hawwa, (1988) places a different emphasis. He stresses the importance of purifying the heart (al-qalb) from spiritual ailments such as hypocrisy (nifaq), seeking praise (sum'ah), showing off (riya'), and self-admiration (ujub), and adorning it with righteous deeds such as prayer, remembrance of God (dhikr), fasting, charity, and the pilgrimage (hajj). Furthermore, he emphasizes emulating the attributes of Allah (al-asmā' al-ḥusnā) and the character of the Prophet Muhammad as the foundation for shaping the personality of a believer. For Said Hawwa, *tazkiyatun nafs* is not merely a theoretical concept, but a process of spiritual education that must be carried out consistently under the guidance of a murabbi.

Nawawi al-Bantani emphasizes the dimension of *tazkiyatun nafs* in his work. He views *tazkiyatun nafs* as the foundation for the development of moral character, which is reflected in social life through honesty, trustworthiness, humility, simplicity, and responsibility. According to him, the success of the purification of the soul is measured by changes in a person's behavior in daily life, not merely by individual spiritual experiences (Ihsan et al., 2024).

An analysis of the thought of Al-Ghazali, Said Hawwa, and Nawawi al-Bantani shows that *tazkiyatun nafs* is understood as a process of human perfection that encompasses the cultivation of faith, the purification of the heart, and the development of moral character. All three emphasize that spiritual transformation must be manifested in concrete behavior, thereby producing individuals of noble character who contribute to the common good of society.

2. Forms of Moral Crisis in the Digital Age

The moral crisis in the digital age is evident through various social phenomena arising from human interaction with technology. These phenomena are interrelated and reinforce one another, thereby forming patterns of behavior that undermine society's

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integrity, spirituality, and ethics. FOMO, or Fear of Missing Out, is a form of social anxiety that arises from the feeling of being left out of one's social circle. Individuals are driven to constantly check notifications and compare themselves to others (Groenestein et al., 2024). This phenomenon exacerbates emotional instability and weakens spiritual resilience. Social media algorithms designed to maximize engagement trigger a dopamine cycle that resembles addiction (De et al., 2025). The impact on morality is the rise of materialistic attitudes, a decline in empathy, and an increase in criminal tendencies driven by the desire to possess what others have.

Social anxiety stemming from the fear of missing out (FOMO) can develop into a social media addiction because individuals are driven to constantly monitor others' activities so they don't feel left behind or excluded (Gori et al., 2023). This digital behavioral addiction is generally characterized by a compulsive urge to constantly check social media, difficulty stopping its use, and disruption of daily functioning (De et al., 2025). Algorithms designed to maximize engagement trigger addictive patterns similar to substance addiction, with dopamine being released every time a notification appears. The moral implications of excessive social media use are most strongly supported by evidence of decreased self-control, increased impulsivity, and a shift in value orientation resulting from exposure to content that is highly emotionally and morally compelling (Bavel et al., 2024).

Dependence on social media can give rise to a culture of "flexing" that is, the urge to showcase luxury, exclusive experiences, and an image of status in order to gain recognition, respect, and social validation from others (Siepmann et al., 2021). This phenomenon tends to foster a materialistic mindset, as status, image, and self-worth become increasingly tied to wealth, possessions, and social appearance (Tuominen et al., 2022). The impact on morale is a loss of integrity due to pretending to have what one does not, a decline in social solidarity, and an increase in dishonesty in pursuit of recognition (Yue et al., 2024).

In a digital space where interactions are becoming increasingly dense, disinformation and hoaxes pose a serious threat because platforms like WhatsApp allow messages to spread rapidly through interconnected group networks, especially when the content touches on group identity, politics, and religion (Nobre et al., 2022). Psychologically, confirmation bias causes people to tend to accept information that aligns with their views, and group identity makes them more likely to believe news that benefits their own group or disparages another group (Ling, 2020). The impact on moral values is evident in the weakening of reflective and critical thinking skills, rising intolerance between groups, and the erosion of honesty, as repeated exposure can make the spread of hoaxes seem less ethically wrong even when the information is unverified or even known to be false (Surjatmodjo et al., 2024).

Social polarization, exacerbated by misinformation, is increasingly creating opportunities for aggressive online behavior in the form of cyberbullying. Cyberbullying is consistently linked to anxiety, depression, social isolation, and, in severe cases, suicidal

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ideation, particularly among adolescents and victims who remain constantly exposed online (Chan et al., 2023). From a moral standpoint, cyberbullying is not merely a momentary ethical transgression; it appears to condition perpetrators to normalize aggression, diminish personal responsibility, and view victims with greater emotional detachment (Lin & Xiao, 2023).

Taken as a whole, these phenomena indicate that technology which should be a means of self-development often ends up normalizing an instant gratification, hedonistic, and materialistic mindset. The generation growing up in the digital age is indeed technically advanced, but spiritually and ethically fragile. Syarifuddin et al, (2025) emphasizes that this moral crisis is a consequence of technological dominance that is not balanced by the strengthening of spiritual values and moral reflection. Therefore, a mechanism for spiritual purification is needed so that people can maintain a balance between technical sophistication and spiritual resilience in the face of modernity.

3. The Application of the Concept of *Tazkiyatun Nafs* as a Solution to the Moral Crisis

The concept of *tazkiyatun nafs* as the purification of the soul is highly relevant to addressing the moral crisis that has emerged in the digital age. The three main stages *takhalli, tahalli*, and *tajalli* can be understood as complementary processes in shaping a healthy, conscious, and transcendentally oriented digital ethic. The *takhall*i stage is the process of ridding oneself of undesirable traits. In the digital context, this is achieved through the practice of a spiritual digital detox, which serves to reduce exposure to negative content, break unproductive digital habits, and cleanse the online environment of accounts and apps that lead to undesirable behavior (Wandira et al., 2023). Examples of undesirable behavior in the digital world are shown in the following table:

Table 1: Manifestations of Vicious Traits in Digital Life and Strategies for *Takhalli*

Reprehensible Traits	Digital Manifestation	Digital *Takhalli* Strategy	Research Support
Ghaflah (unawareness))	Scrolling aimlessly, losing track of time	The principle of screen time management through daily monitoring and limits	Passive use increases social comparison and has negative effects on well-being, while excessive use is characterized by difficulty in stopping and compulsive checking (Verduyn et al., 2020)
Arrogance (self-importance)	Show-off or flexing content, over-posting	Audit content by reviewing posts and removing redundant ones	Self-enhancing posts tend to be used to elicit social responses, and higher usage predicts idealized or false self-presentation (Bareket-Bojmel et al., 2016)

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Hasad (envy)	Compulsively comparing oneself to others, following luxury accounts	Cleaning up your account by unfollowing content that triggers envy	Exposure to upward comparisons reduces self-evaluation and emotions, with envy as the primary mediator (McComb et al., 2023)
Riya' (show off)	Uploads for validation, not grades	Verifying intent before uploading content	Self-presentation drives online engagement and social validation, but reliance on popularity actually lowers self-esteem (Nwafor et al., 2026)
Ghish (to deceive)	Showing what it doesn't have	The habit of honesty by presenting things as they really are	False self-presentation is common, driven by the need for acceptance, and increases the fear of negative evaluation as well as excessive use (Nor et al., 2025)

Takhalli practices can include daily digital self-reflection, limiting social media usage time, reviewing the content one consumes, and adopting a "digital sunset" routine before bed to make room for spiritual reflection. Media psychology studies show that reducing digital exposure decreases compulsive behavior and problematic use, while time limits improve self-control. Thus, *takhalli* serves as a strong foundation for reducing the phenomenon of fear of missing out (FOMO) and digital addiction.

The *tahalli* stage focuses on filling the heart with virtuous qualities that are manifested in digital moral habits. This principle emphasizes the development of prosocial, responsible, and ethical behavior in online interactions. Virtuous qualities can be instilled through concrete digital practices.

Table 2: Internalization of Virtues in Digital Life through *Tahalli*

Praise-Worthy Qualities	Digital Applications	Digital *Tahalli* Practice	Research Support
Patience	Does not react to provocative comments	Delaying a response to negative comments for a full day	Self-control promotes ethical behavior, and patience is key to managing digital emotions (Ramadhan et al., 2026)
Qanaah	Reduce the urge to show off; focus on what you have	A post expressing gratitude that emphasizes acceptance, not luxury	Social media amplifies self-promotion; humility requires putting others first and gratitude (Plaisance & Piantoni, 2026)

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Gratitude	Focus on expressing gratitude, not on comparisons	A daily gratitude practice of writing down three things you're grateful for	Gratitude is a strategy for cultivating humility and healthier relationships (Plaisance & Piantoni, 2026)
Humility	Don't go overboard with your posts; don't seek validation	A minimalist posting style that emphasizes quality over quantity	Humility requires a modest self-assessment and consideration for the needs of others (Plaisance & Piantoni, 2026)
Honesty	Honesty in content; no deception	A commitment to authenticity by presenting things as they really are	Online misrepresentation is a form of deception; honesty and humility protect against unethical digital behavior (Morgan & Fowers, 2022)

This cultivation can be achieved through planning meaningful content, practicing patient and constructive interaction, engaging in daily gratitude, and making a habit of verifying information. Conceptual studies indicate that spiritual habit formation enhances self-control and empathy two key dimensions for curbing negative behaviors such as cyberbullying and flexing. Thus, t*ahalli* is effective in replacing undesirable traits with virtuous ones and reinforcing consistent positive habits.

The stage of *tajalli* is the culmination of the process of tazkiyatun nafs, which emphasizes divine consciousness as the primary filter for every digital action. This principle establishes a transcendental purpose as the guiding principle for online content and interactions, so that every digital activity is evaluated based on its alignment with divine values.

Table 3: Characteristics of *Tajalli* in Digital Interactions and Their Applications

***Tajalli* Characteristics**	**Digital Manifestation**	**Practical Application**	**Research Support**
Maʿrifah (knowledge of Allah)	Awareness that Allah sees every post and comment	Reflection on Divine awareness before engaging in digital activity	Introspection of values and mindful engagement strengthens relationships with social validation (Ballara & Ed, 2023)
Ḥāl (stable state)	Not influenced by negative comments or social validation	Emotional stability that does not depend on others' recognition	Self-regulation determines whether social media supports or harms well-being (Reinecke et al., 2022)
Iḍhār (manifestation of Allah's attributes)	Displaying mercy and wisdom in content	Posts that reflect Divine values	Empathy and connectedness support

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			healthier digital well-being (Chen et al., 2025)
Qurb (closeness to Allah)	Digital interaction as a means of drawing closer to Allah	Worship-oriented perspective in every digital activity	Digital platforms can serve as sites of ritual and spiritual experience (Zaki, 2024)
Sukūn (tranquility)	Not dependent on social validation	Inner peace sourced from Allah, not from follower counts	Validation metrics shape self-presentation and users' emotional responses (Ballara & Ed, 2023)

The practice of *tajalli i*nvolves reflecting on divine consciousness before posting content, setting the intention to draw closer to Allah in every digital interaction, shifting the source of peace from social validation to divine peace, and engaging in maʿrifah reflection after interacting in the digital space. Comparative studies show that *tajalli* strengthens moral reflection with a transcendental dimension that complements modern cognitive interventions. Thus, tajalli provides strong internal motivation for sustainable moral change.

The stages of *takhalli, tahalli,* and *tajalli* together form a comprehensive framework for addressing the digital moral crisis. *Takhalli* serves as a process of purifying oneself of reprehensible traits, *tahalli* as a process of imbuing oneself with virtuous traits, and *tajalli* as a process of deep spiritual contemplation. These three stages complement one another in building sound digital ethics, oriented toward divine values, and capable of facing moral challenges in the digital age with integrity, awareness, and peace of mind.

4. The Application of the Conceptual Integrative Model of *Tazkiyatun Nafs* as a Mediating Variable Between Digital Exposure and Moral Behavior

This integrative conceptual model positions *tazkiyatun nafs* as a mediator that bridges the relationship between digital exposure and moral behavior. Increasingly intensive digital exposure characterized by high daily usage, a flood of notifications, the dominance of entertainment or provocative content, and algorithms that encourage excessive engagement has a direct impact on moral behavior. These impacts can include increased addiction, the emergence of the "fear of missing out" (FOMO) phenomenon, a tendency to "flex," and negative behaviors such as cyberbullying. However, these negative effects are not deterministic, as they can be mediated by the process of *tazkiyatun nafs*, which operates through three main dimensions: *takhalli, tahalli*, and *tajalli.*

Takhalli serves as a process of purifying oneself of undesirable traits through a digital detox, which reduces excessive exposure, minimizes external stimuli, and strengthens self-control. *Tahalli* functions as a process of filling the heart with virtuous traits through the cultivation of digital moral habits that foster empathy, responsibility, and prosocial behavior. *Tajalli* represents the culmination of this process by fostering spiritual awareness that strengthens moral reflection, enhances internal motivation, and

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reinforces integrity in digital interactions. Thus, *tazkiyatun nafs* functions not only as a spiritual filter but also as a psychological mechanism that transforms the negative effects of digital exposure into opportunities for the development of better moral character.

The components of this model can be summarized in terms of the relationships among predictors, mediators, and outcomes. Digital exposure acts as a predictor that influences moral behavior, either directly or through the mediator *tazkiyatun nafs*. The resulting outcomes are moral behaviors that encompass the dimensions of self-control, empathy, integrity, and responsibility.

Table 4: Components of the Integrative Conceptual Model

Component	Variable/Dimension	Impact
Predictor: Digital Exposure	Hours/day, multitasking, online vigilance	Internet/social media addiction, attention disorders, behavioral problems (Benedetto et al., 2024)
Predictor: Platform Design	Notifications, seen indicators, engagement algorithms	Compulsive engagement, interface stress, dependency, FoMO-like pressure (De et al., 2025)
Predictor: Content Type	Negative, appearance-based, provocative, self-presentation	Low self-esteem, social problems, flexing/self-presentation pressure (Dorrestein et al., 2026)
Mediator: *Tazkiyatun Nafs*	*Takhalli* (digital detox), *Tahalli* (moral habits), *Tajalli* (spiritual awareness)	Self-control, emotional regulation, resilience, moral development (Ma'muroh et al., 2024)
Outcome: Moral Behavior	Self-control, empathy, integrity, responsibility	Ethical behavior, prosociality, cyber-ethics, responsible content creation (

The effectiveness of this model depends not only on the relationship between digital exposure and *tazkiyatun nafs*, but is also influenced by a number of moderating factors. Religious communities whether in the form of offline congregations or online zikir groups provide social support that strengthens the *tazkiyah* process. Formal religious education through lectures, schools, or learning modules enhances conceptual understanding and the practice of *tazkiyatun nafs*. Digital literacy plays a crucial role in ensuring healthy technology use, thereby strengthening the effectiveness of digital detox. Age is also a determining factor, as adolescents are more vulnerable to the effects of digital exposure than young adults or adults (da Silva Pinho et al., 2026). Initial levels of religiosity also influence the pace of the internalization of *tazkiyatun nafs*, with high religiosity accelerating the process of developing digital ethics (Putri et al., 2025).

Table 5: Moderators in the Integrative Conceptual Model

Moderator	Description	Effect on Model	Impact (with Sources)
Religious Community (online/offline)	Social support from congregation, dhikr groups	Strengthens the effect of *tazkiyah*	Cohesion, collective dhikr, moral development (Hayat et al., 2025)

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Formal Religious Education	Lectures, religious schools, modules	Enhances understanding of *tazkiyah*	Curriculum integration and habituation of worship (Farhanillah et al., 2025)
Digital Literacy	Ability to use technology healthily	Increases effectiveness of digital detox	Online behavior education more effective than mere restriction (Theopilus et al., 2024)
Age	Adolescents, young adults, adults	Adolescents more vulnerable to exposure	Higher developmental sensitivity and impulsivity (Politte-Corn et al., 2023)

The hypothesis proposed in this model asserts that digital exposure has a direct negative effect on moral behavior, while simultaneously weakening the process of *tazkiyatun nafs*. Conversely, *tazkiyatun nafs* has a positive effect on moral behavior and acts as a mediator that bridges the relationship between digital exposure and moral behavior. Furthermore, religious communities have been shown to reinforce the effects of *tazkiyatun nafs* in shaping moral behavior (Anwar et al., 2025).

Thus, this integrative conceptual model provides a comprehensive theoretical framework for understanding how Islamic spirituality, through *tazkiyatun nafs*, can serve as a solution to the moral crisis in the digital age. This model not only emphasizes the causal relationship between digital exposure and moral behavior but also introduces a transcendental dimension that enriches psychological and social approaches, thereby enabling it to address contemporary moral challenges with a strong spiritual foundation.

5. A Systematic Comparison of Classical Sufi Ethics and Contemporary Media Psychology

A comparison between classical Sufi ethics and modern media psychology reveals significant conceptual similarities. Sufism is grounded in a spiritual-transcendental paradigm, whereas modern media psychology is grounded in an empirical-cognitive paradigm. Although they differ in their epistemological foundations, both demonstrate parallels in emphasizing self-control, environmental influence, habit formation, emotional regulation, and the cultivation of empathy. These similarities indicate that human behavior cannot be separated from a continuous process of practice, a supportive environment, and the ability to consistently regulate oneself. Thus, this common ground can serve as a foundation for formulating an integrative approach to contemporary moral education that is relevant to the challenges of the digital age.

Table 6: Fundamental Similarities Between Sufi Ethics and Modern Media Psychology

Dimension	Classical Ethics (Sufism)	Modern Media Psychology	Intersection Analysis
Self-Control	*Takhalli*, *mujahadah al-nafs*, *muraqabah*, *muhasabah* are used to	Self-regulation is understood as a key meta-skill for	Both place self-control as a prerequisite for behavioral change, but

	restrain desires and build inner discipline (Mas'ud & Fauzan, 2024)	controlling digital behavior; digital mindfulness and self-control tools can help, though effects are not always sufficient for heavy users (Mitsea et al., 2023)	media psychology highlights the limitations of self-control when digital impulses are very strong.
Environmental Influence	Teachers, *halaqah*, congregations, and spiritual communities shape ethics and behavior through guidance, role models, and supervision (Nurani et al., 2025)	Digital platforms shape behavior through emotional exposure, design controls, and online social contexts; digital wellbeing discourse also demands attention to business models and platform ethics (Roffarello & Russis, 2023)	Both view behavior as the result of interaction between internal dispositions and environmental structures.
Habit Formation	Through habituation of virtuous traits until moral actions become spontaneous (Najahah et al., 2024)	Behavioral modification and digital regulation training emphasize habituation and repeated practice for sustainable behavioral change (Amelia et al., 2025)	Both stress that stable change arises from repeated practice, not momentary intention.
Emotional Control	Patience (*sabr*), forbearance (*hilm*), trust (*tawakkul*), and *dhikr* are used to relieve pressure, maintain calmness, and build inner balance in digital spaces (Nurani et al., 2025)	Emotion regulation, emotional intelligence, and mindful technology use are linked to healthier media use and greater resilience (Piccerillo & Digennaro, 2025)	Both place emotional regulation as a prerequisite for healthy digital interaction.
Empathy	*Ta'awun* (cooperation), *rahmah* (compassion), *tasamuh* (tolerance) are positioned as social ethics of Sufism in digital relations (Zamzamy et al., 2025)	Empathy and prosocial norms emerge as key predictors or motivators for responsible and prosocial online behavior (Piccerillo & Digennaro, 2025)	Both regard empathy as a norm of interaction, though media psychology usually frames it in terms of prosociality and belonging.

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An analysis of these similarities confirms that Sufism and media psychology both emphasize the need for consistent practice, a supportive environment, and strong self-control. These similarities open up opportunities for a more comprehensive integration, in which Sufism can provide a spiritual foundation, while media psychology provides empirical tools to measure the effectiveness of behavioral change. This integration has the potential to yield a moral education approach that is more relevant to the dynamics of the digital age, while maintaining a balance between spiritual and psychological aspects.

In addition to their similarities, there are fundamental differences between classical Sufism and modern media psychology. These differences lie primarily in ontology, objectives, intervention tools, evidence-based methodology, sources of knowledge, motivations for change, and the concept of error. Sufism is grounded in a spiritual paradigm that emphasizes the soul (nafs) as a transcendental entity, with the ultimate goals of self-purification and devotion to Allah (Salleh & Mahmood, 2025). In contrast, modern media psychology is based on an empirical paradigm that emphasizes behavior as a psychological phenomenon that can be measured quantitatively (von Sikorski, 2020).

Table 7: Epistemological Differences Between Sufi Ethics and Modern Media Psychology

Dimension	Classical Ethics (Sufism)	Modern Media Psychology	Difference Analysis
Ontology	Humans are understood to possess *nafs* (soul) and an inner dimension directed toward closeness to Allah; knowledge and ethics are embedded in spiritual transformation, not merely outward behavior (Mardatillah et al., 2025)	The subject is generally positioned as a psychological individual whose responses, affects, attention, and behaviors are observed in media environments and explained through empirical, historical, sociological, or psychological categories (Supena, 2024)	Sufism is grounded in spiritual ontology; psychology is grounded in material ontology.
Purpose	The main goal is *tazkiyatun nafs*, moral formation, and achieving *insan kamil* or closeness to Allah (Anbiya, 2023)	The main goal is well-being, emotional regulation, social functioning, and healthier adaptation to digital media pressures (Nurani et al., 2025)	Sufism is oriented toward spiritual and moral salvation; modern media psychology is oriented toward psychological-functional well-being.
Intervention Instruments	Instruments include *dhikr*, *muhasabah*, *zuhud*,	Modern instruments tend to be	Sufism uses spiritual-disciplinary

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	tawakkul, *suluk*, *tazkiyatun nafs*, and teacher–student relationships as part of *tarbiya ruhaniyah* (Robingatun et al., 2024)	psychotherapy techniques, cognitive interventions, digital exposure limitation, and adaptive strategies applicable across clinical or behavioral contexts (Amal & Othman, 2025)	practices; modern media psychology uses therapeutic-cognitive techniques designed for behavioral change and coping.
Methodology of Evidence	Evidence in Sufism is built through classical texts, philosophical reflection, hermeneutics, *ta'wil*, and inner experience as sources of meaning (Supena, 2024)	Modern evidence relies on qualitative studies, surveys, content analysis, experiments, and empirical data tested across subjects (Nurani et al., 2025)	Sufism emphasizes normative-hermeneutic validation and spiritual experience; modern media psychology emphasizes empirical-methodological validation.
Sources of Knowledge	Sources of Sufism knowledge come from the Qur'an, Sunnah, *ma'rifah*, *qalb*, and the legacy of scholars/teachers, emphasizing integration of revelation, reason, and spiritual intuition (Mardatillah et al., 2025)	Modern sources of knowledge come from observation, statistics, behavioral analysis, and scientific theoretical constructions built through socio-psychological research (Supena, 2024)	Sufism draws from revelation and disciplined spiritual intuition; modern media psychology draws from scientific data and theoretical inference.
Motivation for Change	Self-change is motivated by worship, *ihsan*, Allah's mercy, closeness to Him, and purification from blameworthy traits (Shukhrat, 2025)	Self-change is motivated by mental calmness, stress reduction, self-acceptance, social support, and social functioning (Firmansyah et al., 2026)	Sufism emphasizes transcendental-theological motivation; modern media psychology emphasizes psychosocial-pragmatic motivation.
Concept of Error	Error is understood as the dominance of *akhlaq al-dhamimah*, an unpurified *nafs*, and moral deviation from divine guidance (Anbiya, 2023)	Error is understood as patterns that worsen stress, anxiety, relational dysfunction, or maladaptive behavior	Sufism views error as a moral-spiritual problem; modern media psychology views it as a psychological-

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		in media use (Nurani et al., 2025)	functional and behavioral problem.

The epistemological differences between classical Sufism and modern media psychology do not preclude the possibility of integration. In fact, these differences open the door to a richer approach, provided it is carried out carefully and methodologically. Sufism can provide an ontological foundation and transcendental motivation oriented toward the purification of the soul, while media psychology provides empirical tools and measurement methods that can be used to test the effectiveness of interventions.

This integration requires empirical validation of Sufi concepts so that they can be operationalized in contemporary research. With such validation, spiritual concepts such as *takhalli, tahalli*, and *tazkiyatun nafs* can be translated into behavioral indicators that can be measured psychologically. Conversely, media psychology can enrich Sufism with methodological tools that enable empirical testing of the effectiveness of spiritual practices in addressing the digital moral crisis.

Thus, the integration of Sufism and media psychology has the potential to yield a more holistic approach. Sufism provides a transcendental direction that emphasizes the spiritual dimension, while media psychology offers empirical tools for measuring and implementing behavioral change. The integration of the two can produce a model of moral education relevant to the challenges of the digital age, while maintaining a balance between technical sophistication and spiritual resilience. This approach not only addresses the practical needs of modern society but also restores a moral orientation to the transcendental dimension, which has long been marginalized within the secular paradigm.

D. Conclusion

This study shows that the concept of *tazkiyatun nafs* in the Sufi tradition through the stages of *takhalli, tahalli*, and *tajalli* can be positioned as a more comprehensive conceptual framework than technical-cognitive or secular psychological approaches in addressing the moral crisis in the digital age. The strength of this model lies in its ability to address the ontological root of the problem namely, the soul's orientation and transcendental motivation which have long been sidelined in interventions based on digital literacy or cognitive therapy. *Takhalli* functions as a digital detox process that reduces excessive exposure and minimizes external stimuli; *tahalli* plays a role in fostering digital moral habits that cultivate empathy, honesty, and responsibility; while *tajalli* fosters spiritual awareness that strengthens moral reflection and transcendental motivation in online interactions. Thus, *tazkiyatun nafs* serves not only as a spiritual filter but also as a psychological mechanism that transforms the negative effects of digital exposure into opportunities for the development of better moral character.

The proposed integrative conceptual model positions *tazkiyatun nafs* as a mediator between digital exposure and moral behavior, with moderators including religious communities, formal religious education, digital literacy, age, and initial level of

religiosity. This model fills a research gap identified in the literature namely, the lack of studies directly linking Islamic spirituality to digital behavioral phenomena such as FOMO, cyberbullying, and flexing. The proposed conceptual indicators of *tazkiyah* such as the self-purification scale, frequency of muhasabah, digital zikir practices, and levels of gratitude and humility enable the translation of Sufi concepts into empirically testable variables for future research. Theoretically, this study contributes an integrative conceptual model that explains *tazkiyah* as a mediator between digital exposure and moral behavior. Methodologically, this article proposes a framework of *tazkiyah* indicators that can serve as a reference for future research. Practically, *tazkiyah*-based intervention models such as muhasabah reminder apps, online zikir communities, and digital religious education modules can be implemented to foster moral integrity, spiritual well-being, and mental resilience among the younger generation. Thus, this study reaffirms the relevance of Sufism particularly *tazkiyatun nafs* as a practical and context-specific solution to the challenges of digital morality today.

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