

The Tazkiyatun Nafs Approach to Overcoming Social Media Addiction in Teenagers

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Abstract: Social media has become an alternative way to interact without exerting energy, especially among teenagers, using only a mobile phone and the internet. The massive popularity of social media has led to negative impacts, such as anxiety, depression, and decreased productivity, requiring interventions that focus not only on behavior but also on the spiritual dimension. The *tazkiyatun nafs* (self-control) approach in Islamic counseling is expected to provide a solution to address the phenomenon of social media addiction among adolescents. The primary focus is on applying the core concepts of *tazkiyatun nafs*, namely *mubasabah* (introspection), *taubat* (regret and commitment), and *qana'ah* (sufficiency), as a healing strategy. This study used a library research approach in conjunction with a descriptive qualitative method. Data collection was conducted through fieldwork from journal reviews, books, research reports, and other sources. The analysis indicates that *mubasabah* plays a role as the first step in raising adolescents' awareness of the source of their addiction. Furthermore, the process of *taubat* (repentance) supports the determination to make changes, while instilling the value of *qana'ah* (contentment) can act as spiritual protection that reduces social media addiction.

Keywords: *Tazkiyatun Nafs*; Social Media Addiction; Teenagers

INTRODUCTION

Social media has become an integral part of everyday life in today's digital age, especially for teenagers. Social media refers to online platforms that facilitate interactive communication, teamwork, and the sharing of various types of information, including text, images, videos, and audio. Social media is often considered a communication tool that allows users to create and consume content (Qadir & M.Ramli, 2024). According to data from Hootsuite (We Are Social), social media continues to play an important role in the online lives of Indonesians. As of January 2025, 50.2% of the population, or 143 million people, were registered as social media users. These statistics show how widespread the use of social media is in Indonesia as a primary channel for information, entertainment, and communication. (Riyanto, 2025).

Various platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and Twitter offer ease of interaction, access to information, and an almost unlimited space for expression. However, behind its popularity and benefits, social media also carries serious potential risks, one of which is addiction. In a quantitative study conducted by Rizki Aprilia et al. in 2020 on the level of addiction among adolescents to social

media, the results showed that the majority of adolescents, namely 51.4%, experienced a low level of addiction, while nearly half of adolescents, 48.6%, experienced a high level of addiction. (R. Aprilia, Sriati, & Hendrawati, 2020).

This excessive dependence on the virtual world has been proven to have a negative impact on the mental health, social development, and even academic achievement of adolescents, creating new challenges for family well-being in the modern era. Social media is an online platform that facilitates interactive communication, teamwork, and the sharing of various types of information, including text, photos, videos, and audio. Social media is often considered a communication tool that allows users to create and consume content. (Qadir & M.Ramli, 2024).

From the above issues, it is clear that adolescents are vulnerable to social media addiction, which has negative effects. The negative effects include disrupting sleep, increasing the risk of emotional disorders, anxiety, and depression. Socially, communication skills decline and face-to-face interactions decrease. Academic achievement declines and focus is disrupted, while exposure to social media actually increases consumptive behavior. (Tryas Amanda Putri, Juniar Gasia Nova, Tesa Amilia Putri, Risma Anita Puriani, & Rizki Novirson, 2025). In addition, appropriate measures are needed to overcome social media addiction among adolescents. In overcoming this, Islamic counseling offers a relevant alternative, namely the concept of *tazkiyatun nafs* or purification of the soul, which aims to cleanse the soul and provide inner peace in the form of worship, self-reflection, righteous deeds, and so on. This article aims to analyze how the concept of *tazkiyatun nafs* can overcome social media addiction in adolescents.

METHOD

The research methodology used in this scientific article combines a literature study approach with a qualitative descriptive method. Written summaries of journals, articles, books, and other documents that describe current or historical data relevant to the research topic are known as bibliographic studies. As required in research, bibliographic studies also divide the literature into subtopics. (Sugiyono, 2023). This strategy is carried out by searching for literature sources and reviewing related subjects. To obtain the information needed in this study, the data collection method was based on a review of books, journals, theses, and other documents on *tazkiyatun nafs* and social media addiction.

Data collection was carried out in several steps. First, paraphrasing, which is the collection of original data from various sources to be filtered using the author's own language. Second, quotations, which is the recording of data in accordance with the original data contained in the data source. Third, synoptic, which is the recording of data based on conclusions obtained from data sources. After that, the collected data will be organized according to sub-discussions. After going through the data collection process, the data collection was then analyzed in the following ways. First, integration, which is the unification of two different elements between science and religion to form a complete and comprehensive whole. Second, heuristics, which is an effort to present innovations from the main object of study after describing and analyzing thoughts.

The author prioritized research journal references, which were then analyzed, categorized, irrelevant information was eliminated, and compiled to reach a final conclusion and confirmation. The data for this scientific article was interpreted after the data collection process was completed.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Phenomenon of Social Media Addiction in Adolescents

According to the family & adolescent counseling guidance book (2017), Piaget (Hurlock, 1991) supports this view by stating that, psychologically, adolescence is a period when people integrate into adult society and children no longer feel inferior to older people, but rather equal, or at least equal to their peers. Puberty, as it is more widely known, involves many emotional aspects in the process of integration into adult society today (Laela, 2017). Teenagers also have several common characteristics, one of which is a high level of curiosity; generally, teenagers are very curious. This curiosity makes them want to try new things, go on adventures, and explore everything (Laela, 2017). One of these things is trying to use social media, where trying to play on social media, such as sending messages, making video calls, and playing games continuously, makes them addicted. This is where adolescent addiction to social media arises.

Social media has indeed become a place for online interaction in the current era, where various things can be found. According to Nasrullah (2015), social media is an online platform that allows users to engage, exchange, and generate content in a virtual environment, including written, visual, audio, and video content. Social media gives users the opportunity to actively engage and enables two-way communication (Qadir & M.Ramli, 2024). According to KBBI, social media is any website or application that allows users to participate in social networking or generate and share content (Kamus kita, 2025). In short, social media is a place used for online socializing via the internet, whether through messages, calls, videos, and so on.

According to Cardwell (2003), the high level of social networking addiction among adolescents stems from a lack of observation, and if they receive support from those around them, this support will encourage them to do it repeatedly. (R. Aprilia et al., 2020). According to Kootesh, Raisi, and Ziapour (2016), someone who is addicted to social media is someone who is unable to control their excessive and heavy use of social media, causing social and psychological problems. (Jamaludin, Syarifah, & Karyadi, 2022). Research by Jamaludin et al. on social media addiction among students found that of the 103 students at FIKES UIN Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta, most respondents experienced moderate social media addiction, namely 68 people (66%), while 25 students (24.3%) were classified as having a high level of social media addiction, and 10 students (9.7%) had a low level of addiction. Students in the moderate social media addiction category showed moderate frequency of use, but this could fluctuate to high or low levels. According to Young (2004), students who are addicted to social media show a number of symptoms, including feelings of pleasure when using the platform and feelings of unhappiness, anxiety, and loneliness when they cannot use it. This can lead to problems in the real world, such as skipping classes and being unable to focus on studying (Jamaludin et al., 2022).

Teenagers who use social media excessively can experience a number of adverse effects. Uncontrolled use can increase the risk of addiction, depression, and anxiety related to mental health. High social media use can cause sleep disturbances and a tendency to delay sleep. Social media addiction can limit the frequency of face-to-face interactions and hinder the development of communication skills. In addition, excessive use of social media in class can increase consumptive behavior and decrease learning productivity. Therefore, to control social media use and maximize its benefits without sacrificing the psychological and social well-being of adolescents, awareness and appropriate strategies are needed (Tryas Amanda Putri et al., 2025).

The Concept of Tazkiyatun Nafs

Tazkiyatun Nafs is the pursuit of spiritual purity, which includes stages of self-control, self-development, and self-empowerment, according to the prominent Islamic scholar Imam Al-Ghazali. According to Al-Ghazali's explanation in *Ihya' Ulumuddin*, Tazkiyatun Nafs is a gradual process consisting of three steps: takhalli, which is cleansing oneself of negative traits; tahalli, which is adorning oneself with noble traits; and tajalli, which is achieving spiritual closeness to Allah. The goal of this process is to elevate a person's spiritual level so that they can find inner peace and true happiness (Ma'muroh, Abqorina, & Amrin, 2024).

According to Imam Ghazali's book *tazkiyatun nafs*, tazkiyatun nafs determines one's security or closeness to Allah, whether one will be saved or perish before Allah, and includes the mission of the Messengers and the aspirations of righteous individuals. Etymologically, tazkiyah has two meanings, namely purification and improvement. This meaning also applies in terms of terminology. *Zakatun-nafsi* means cleansing (*tathabbur*) the soul of all diseases and shortcomings, realizing (*tahaqquq*) various levels within it, and making names and attributes as its morals (*takhallua*). Only when done perfectly and correctly can various acts of worship and certain practices lead to tazkiyah of the heart and soul. At that moment, the heart realizes a number of meanings that purify the soul and have different effects on each part of the body, including the mouth, eyes, ears, and so on. A pure soul is most clearly marked by good morals and muamalah towards God and fellow human beings. Sacrificing one's life for jihad is one way a person can exercise their rights before Allah.

For humans, this is in line with the teachings and requirements of *maqam* and *taklif* determined by Allah (Hawwa, 1998). According to Haeny Rahmatunnisa, *tazkiyyah al-nafs* is an effort to purify the soul by discarding despicable deeds and upholding the principles of praiseworthy morals. In line with Islamic principles, *tazkiyyah al-nafs* is a procedure for purifying the soul, both physically and spiritually (Rahmatunnisa, 2022). In short, *tazkiyatun nafs* is a process of cleansing the soul which is carried out in the form of worship, good deeds, praiseworthy attitudes, and so on with the intention of pleasing Allah ta'ala.

Takhalli, tahalli, and tajalli are the three main phases of applying *tazkiyah nafs* in Sufism. These three steps need to be completed in sequence because they are interrelated. Takhalli is the first step in the process of self-purification, which includes the removal of undesirable traits and bad behavior driven by lust. This process involves abstaining from sins, both obvious and hidden, including arrogance, pride, prejudice, jealousy, envy, and anger. Takhalli emphasizes the importance of seeking Allah's forgiveness and repenting to cleanse oneself of sin. According to Imam Ghazali, repentance is an important part of this process.

Tahalli is where the pure soul is adorned with virtue. Continuous spiritual practice transforms negative traits into positive ones. This creates a person with high moral standards. Dhikr, which Imam Ghazali refers to as "the solvent of the heart," or the constant remembrance of Allah, is one way to achieve this. At the tahalli stage, individuals are trained to instill good qualities such as remorse, patience, asceticism, keeping trust, increasing knowledge, faith, piety, and performing acts of worship such as dhikr, prayer, reading the Qur'an, and reflecting on its contents. Praised traits such as honesty, trustworthiness, humility, and helping others must also be made part of everyday life.

Tajalli, the final stage, symbolizes the highest level of spiritual attainment. It is believed that the soul will be freed from evil desires after diligently undergoing the processes of takhalli and tahalli. At this stage, it is hoped that individuals can attain a soul that is loved by Allah. With good

character and righteous actions, a person will feel a deep appreciation for religion that fosters love for God. In *tajalli*, the barrier between humans and Allah disappears, and every deed is done out of love for Him. At this point, the relationship with the Creator becomes more intimate, and all actions are based solely on sincere love for Him (N. P. Aprilia, Surahman, & Sumarna, 2024).

Tazkiyatun nafs, or purification of the soul, is the core of Islamic counseling that focuses on inner and spiritual improvement. Therefore, the process of tazkiyatun nafs aims to strengthen the potential for goodness and suppress the potential for evil. In practice, tazkiyatun nafs is carried out through three steps, namely muhasabah (introspection), taubat (repentance), and qana'ah (contentment). The first step, a person's self-awareness to assess and correct past and future actions for self-improvement, is known as muhasabah. Muhasabah can be used as a tool to correct actions and mindsets that contradict established moral and spiritual principles. From this perspective, muhasabah means committing to constructive change in addition to assessing or recognizing previous actions (Musfichin, 2023).

Second, repentance is a concept that consists of three main elements: knowledge, state (*hāl*), and action. Knowledge here means understanding that sinful deeds carry great risks and become a barrier between a person and everything they love. When this understanding is firmly embedded in the heart, it gives rise to inner pain due to the loss of loved ones. If a person realizes that this loss is the result of sins that have been committed, they will feel deep sadness and distress. This feeling is called remorse—the essence of true repentance. In Islamic psychotherapy, repentance plays an important role in the process of healing and restoring human nature. Repentance that is done sincerely (*taubat nasuha*) is not only a form of spiritual obedience, but also an effective psychological means of restoring a person's mental and emotional condition (Gustiwi, Shofiah, & Rajab, 2022).

The final step is qana'ah, which is the ability to accept all of Allah's gifts without complaining and to always accept and think positively about what Allah has given. Qana'ah refers to the way of maintaining simplicity so that the heart remains calm and peaceful, and avoids the glitz and glamour of the world. As a result, it is impossible to separate qana'ah from asceticism because asceticism warns us about the dangers of seeking and loving the world excessively. According to Hamka's book, *Modern Sufism*, qana'ah means “accepting what is sufficient.” The definition of qana'ah includes accepting all of God's provisions with patience, asking for what is appropriate while striving to obtain it, accepting things as they are willingly, and so on. Because a person will be grateful for everything that happens to them and refrain from rushing into worldly affairs, qana'ah is the right behavior. (Khalikurrahman, 2023).

Conventional counseling therapy modalities, such as cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT), typically focus on recognizing and changing unhealthy thought and behavior patterns that contribute to social media addiction. Adolescents can learn relaxation techniques, identify triggers, and create healthier behavior plans with the help of a therapist. However, these methods tend to be worldly and only consider material outcomes.

On the other hand, Islamic therapy has a more general purpose and is based on spirituality. The main idea behind tazkiyatun nafs, or self-purification, is to purify the heart and soul from the inside out, in addition to improving outward behavior. The purpose of muhasabah, or introspection, is to acknowledge one's shortcomings before Allah, in addition to becoming self-aware. Similarly, qana'ah (contentment) is the spiritual belief that true happiness and inner satisfaction come only from Allah's pleasure, not from social media recognition, rather than merely a psychological strategy to avoid comparison. Because it functions at the level of faith and belief,

Islamic counseling provides more comprehensive and lasting solutions, as well as greater incentives for addiction recovery.

Integrating the Tazkiyatun Nafs Approach in Overcoming Social Media Addiction

As explained earlier, tazkiyatun nafs is a process of healing the soul which is carried out in the form of worship, good deeds, praiseworthy attitudes, and so on with the intention of pleasing Allah ta'ala.

According to Tryas et al., excessive use of social media can have a negative impact on adolescents. This includes mental health problems such as anxiety and depression, sleep disorders, and reduced communication and face-to-face interaction skills. In addition, excessive use can also increase social media consumption and decrease learning productivity. Therefore, it is important to understand social media use, have a good plan to deal with it, and ensure that its benefits can be felt without sacrificing the psychological and social well-being of adolescents (Tryas Amanda Putri et al., 2025). The tazkiyatun nafs approach provides a structured guide for dealing with social media addiction. This method can be applied through three main steps: Muhasabah or self-introspection as an important step to begin the recovery process. In the case of social media addiction, muhasabah serves as a diagnostic step that helps adolescents find the root cause of their addictive behavior. Dependence on social media is often not the core problem, but rather a symptom of deeper issues such as emptiness, lack of self-confidence, or the desire to escape reality. An Islamic counselor can help teenagers engage in introspection and ask important questions: What am I looking for in social media recognition? Why do I feel anxious when I don't see my phone? This process will identify the emotional and spiritual triggers that cause them to seek escape, so that recovery can focus on the root of the problem.

After recognizing the problem through muhasabah, the next step is taubat as an action or improvement. Taubat is not just a statement of regret, but a sincere commitment to abandon negative behavior and return to a better path. In the context of counseling, counselors can support teenagers in making real commitments, such as gradually reducing the duration of social media use or deleting the most problematic applications. The idea of repentance provides deep spiritual encouragement because every step of change is seen as a form of obedience to Allah, not just a mental goal. This makes the recovery process more meaningful and sustainable.

The ultimate goal of the tazkiyatun nafs process is to achieve a state of qana'ah, which means satisfaction and peace of mind. Qana'ah acts as a spiritual shield that protects teenagers from the temptation to compare themselves to unrealistic standards found on social media. By instilling the understanding that true happiness does not depend on recognition or fame in the virtual realm, counselors help them find satisfaction that comes from within themselves and their relationship with God. When someone achieves qana'ah, the desire for external validation diminishes, and they can live their lives with gratitude without having to rely on social media.

Through these three steps, tazkiyatun nafs effectively cleanses the soul of dependencies and restores individuals to a stable and peaceful inner state.

CONCLUSION

Tazkiyatun nafs is a process of healing the soul which is carried out in the form of worship, good deeds, praiseworthy attitudes, and so on with the intention of pleasing Allah ta'ala. The tazkiyatun nafs approach can be a solution to overcome social media addiction in adolescents. This approach distinguishes itself from conventional counseling by integrating the spiritual dimension

as the core of recovery. In today's era, adolescents are prone to spiritual emptiness due to excessive interaction with social media, which can lead to negative effects such as anxiety, depression, and addiction. The concept of integrating the tazkiyatun nafs approach has a clear framework through the stages of muhasabah as the first step, taubat as the action step, and qana'ah as the final result, in which adolescents are guided to improve themselves from within. This study has limitations because it does not involve field studies or interviews, thus providing opportunities for further research in a more measurable empirical context. It is recommended that future research explore the effectiveness of this approach empirically, for example through case studies or experiments, to confirm the theoretical findings discussed in this article.

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